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CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TRICHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILUPPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

WHO probe into origins of coronavirus a dud

The coronavirus is unlikely to have leaked from a Chinese lab and is more likely to have jumped to humans from an animal, a WHO expert said on Tuesday. WHO food safety and animal diseases expert Peter Ben Embarek made the assessment at the end of a visit to Wuhan, in central China, where a team of scientists is investigating the possible origins of the coronavirus. The first cases were discovered in the city in December 2019.

(Clockwise from left) An aerial view of the Tapovan barrage two days after the flash floods; rescuers try to reach the tunnel from another end; and a recovered body | SUKUMAR YADAV

RESCUE EFFORT

- Over 100 personnel from ITBP, SDRF and NDRF part of the rescue team. In all, over 800 personnel are on the site. 700 personnel are on standby
- Two earthmovers have excavated over 6,700 tonnes of slush from the tunnel. They have reached 130 m into the 30 ft high, 25 ft wide tunnel. But muck removal is taking time, reducing the cleared part to 90 m
- A drone is being used to look inside the tunnel to find possible entry points through the slush/muck

RACE AGAINST TIME

Rescuers trying to reach 37 workers trapped in tunnel; 32 bodies found so far

VINEET UPADHYAY @ Dehradun

WITH the toll in the Uttarakhand disaster climbing to 32, rescue workers raced against time on Tuesday to save the 37 workers trapped deep inside the Tapovan tunnel since Sunday's flash floods that choked it with loads of slush. The 37 are part of the 174 others who are still missing.

Officials from the Army Medical Corps (AMC) said the trapped workers are not just without food and water, night time temperature within the tunnel could go down to as low as 2°C. "They don't have food, water and additional amenities to shield themselves from the cold. Time indeed is running out for them," an AMC official agreed."

But officials associated with the project said workers have enough clothing to give them some protection from the freezing temperature. Rakesh Dimri, an official from NTPC said, "The workers have warm clothes, boots, helmet with headlight, a torch, a rope, a knife and other items. I hope they will be rescued."

The key to survival is the availability of air vents, said medical experts. Dr Vipul Kandwal, a medical practitioner in Dehradun, said, "If they are not drowned, air passage would act as a lifesaver. The problem with sludge is it blocks almost everything, including oxygen."

Dr Adarsh Singh concurred. "Time is not on their side, as a human can survive without food or water or both for a week or so under such conditions." However, they do not rule out the possibility of a miracle. "We have witnessed miracles and I am certain that our forces will save all those men. Whole nation's prayers and wishes are with them," said Dr Singh.

Meanwhile, officials have deployed heli-bound Laser and Electromagnetic Pulse Imager to look for air pockets in the 1.9 km long tunnel network at the hydropower project site. Manjunath P C, commandant of Indian Reserve Battalion said, "This will act as a multiplier in our efforts to save the trapped workers."

Meanwhile, six bodies were found at different locations on Tuesday, including Raini village, Tapovan, Nandprayag, Karnpyarag and Haridwar, taking the total body count to 32. From within the tunnel, nine dismembered body parts were found. Also five vehicles that were swept into the tunnel have been recovered. They include a Scorpio and a JCB.

Naval divers have been deployed to search for bodies at various locations, including in the vicinity of the Tapovan project as more than 100 workers were at the site when tragedy struck.

Aparna Kumar, deputy-inspector general, ITBP, Dehradun sector said, "No stone has been left unturned to save those men. We have reached beyond 100 metres into the 180-metre stretch of the tunnel where the men are trapped." Many feel at this pace the operation to reach them could take three-four more days. P9

I'm proud to be a Hindustani Muslim: Azad in last RS speech

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

AN emotional Prime Minister Narendra Modi bade a tearful farewell to Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, whose current tenure ends on February 15. Azad signed off with a poignant speech that drew a parallel between the lives of Muslims in India and Pakistan, and said he prided himself in being a Hindustani Musalman.

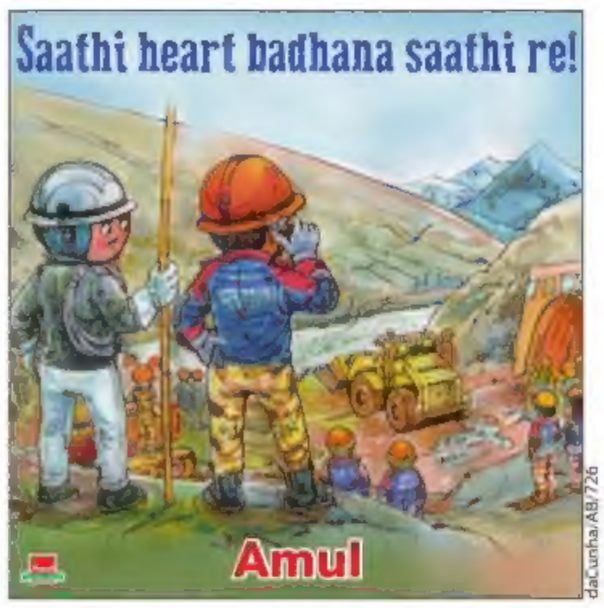
Asserting that India was untainted by the evil practices prevalent in countries like Pakistan, Azad said, "If any Muslim in the world should be proud, it should be the Hindustani Muslims. I am among those who have never been to Pakistan, but when I read about the evils that exist in Pakistani society, I think Hindustani Muslims should be proud."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wipes a tear as he bids farewell to Ghulam Nabi Azad | PTI

Modi's speech was interspersed with many long pauses as he broke down while recalling his long association with Azad Describing him as his true friend, Modi said: "his work will inspire generations of MPs to come. Posts come, high offices come, power comes, but one must learn from Ghulam Nabi Azadji how to handle them."

Recalling the 2007 terror attack in Kashmir, where a grenade was lobbed at a bus carrying Gujarat pilgrims, Modi said, "Nabiji was as concerned as he would have been if his family members were victims. He was the first person to call me. During that call, he continuously wept," Modi said, adding that he would always expect Azad to share his inputs with him. P9

> I worry that after Azad, whosoever will take over from him, will have to fill very big boots because he cared not only about his party but about the country as well as the House. This is not a small thing, this a big thing
>
> Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Ghulam Nabi Azad



'Instigator' of Red Fort riots Deep Sidhu held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

SMALL-time actor Deep Sidhu, who was on the run after allegedly instigating a mob to desecrate the Tricolour at the Red Fort on Republic Day, was arrested from his hideout in Haryana's Karnal on Monday night. Sidhu carried a reward of ₹1 lakh.

A team of Southwestern Range of Special Cell led by Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Sanjeev Yadav made the arrest around 10.30 pm at Karnal, where he had been hiding for the past 15 days. However, he kept releasing provocative videos to instigate Punjab and Haryana youth, police said.

Sidhu was produced before Metropolitan Magistrate Prigya Gupta at the Tis Hazari Court on Tuesday afternoon and was remanded in seven-day police custody. Crime branch officials claimed that the actor had instigated the mob to break the barricades with tractors. Yadav said Sidhu had been changing his location to evade arrest. Sources claimed Sidhu's friends had refused him accommodation and help. Sidhu was in touch with a California-based woman, who helped him upload the provocative videos through Facebook.

K'TAKA DIGEST

State budget in early March: CM

Davanagere: Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on Tuesday said he will present the state budget in the first week of March, and the date will be decided in a day or two. Speaking to reporters at Rajanahalli in Davanagere, the CM said he has begun holding pre-budget meetings with ministers and officials, and he will do his best within the financial constraints | P4

Summer vacation to be trimmed

Bengaluru: Primary and Secondary Education Minister S Suresh Kumar, speaking during a visit to the Karnataka-Maharashtra border districts on Tuesday, announced that summer holidays for schools will be curtailed this year to ensure a near-normal academic year for 2021-22. However, the holidays will not be cancelled, an official clarified on the rumours making the rounds. P2

Now NITI Aayog, ministers on Koo

Bengaluru: In response to Twitter not complying with the order to block 257 accounts tweeting about "farmer genocide", there is now a huge surge in downloads of homegrown app, Koo. From Union ministers to government bodies, including MyGov, National Informatics Centre (NIC), and NITI Aayog, there is a beeline to join the Indian microblogging site | P7

BANGALORE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

T. Chowdaiah Road, Kumara Park West, Bengaluru - 560 020.

Warning Notice to Unauthorised Constructors in Dr. Shivaram Karanth Layout

The Process of creation of Dr. Shivaram Karanth Layout is in progress. It has come to the notice of the Authority that unauthorized buildings are being constructed and sold in the notified land areas. In this background, as per the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, all the buildings constructed and being constructed after 03.08.2018 are unauthorized. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has ordered to take action to remove these structures. The order of the court is as follows:

"To ensure that in the interregnum and from now onwards no further constructions come up. The Commissioner, BDA, would undertake exercise for satellite imaging of the area in question for identifying and noting the constructions as they exist. The said exercise would be undertaken within a period of three days from the date of receipt of a copy of this order. This exercise would be repeated periodically every month. and in case any new constructions are noticed, they would be brought to the notice of the committee and action, including demolition etc. would be undertaken."

Regarding this issue the public has already been cautioned vide public notices several times. Even then some land owners have constructed buildings without authorization and construction work of some buildings are in progress. Engineers of the Authority have also issued notices to land owners who have constructed unauthorized buildings. Even then such unauthorized buildings are coming up. These unauthorized buildings will not be legalized and as per the order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court all the unauthorised structures constructed and being constructed after 03.08.2018 will be demolished. This Notice should be treated as a Public Notice.

Sd/-
Dr. H.R. Mahadev,
Commissioner.

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Prime Minister

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